576 643 Thus, although the Mogho Naba would not in the least object to shaking hands with a Bambara or a Djerma, he would be astonished if a native Moaga -- even an official -- should offer his hand.

● 573 576 As soon as the children of a naba have reached the age of discretion, they may no longer play with their "papa," even less shake hands with him. They must henceforth follow the general rule which requires the Mossi salute, kantissé.

576 602 [111] Nowadays naba (kombemba) and nayiridamba (ministers of the emperor) understand the uselessness of such signs of distrust. Therefore, even though they continue to be less familiar with their relatives (brothers, uncles, and sons -- whom they regard as rivals), they willingly offer their hands to Mossi of any standing and to foreigners.

644 Reception by the naba. 1) Up to the present time and despite some thirty-five years of French occupation, the way one is received at the court of the emperor, which, of course, befalls his servitors, has altered very little. Natives who are now officials in the administration and in business enterprises are still treated on the same footing as their less highly placed compatriots. Not only are they required to perform the kantissé (Mossi salute) as described by Father Mangin, but also afterwards they must sit on the ground, a position that is difficult in European clothes. Foreigners (Bambara, [648] Djerma, even Gourounsi) are offered seats because the soroné do not regard them as fellow countrymen.

645 576 352 177 2) By the ministers. At the present time all the emperor's ministers have comfortable houses and splendid drawing rooms furnished with Morris chairs and folding chairs. These seats are offered [112] to visitors of any standing, while benches two or three meters long are reserved for persons of less consequence (house boys, cooks, circle guards, notables, etc.).

631 576 352 3) By the kombemba. Benches are always reserved for visitors of note or, if there are none, mats are provided. Some of these chiefs even own a few commonplace chairs and perhaps one or two folding chairs.

562 593 644 Rights of parents over their daughters. Although, as has already been noted, the parents retain the right to help their daughters in small ways, they may not, under any circumstances or pretext, break off their engagement nor prevent their marriage. Still less can they promise the daughter to a third party or expect any sort of gifts from the naba.

Later on, in the event that there is agreement between the parties, the husbands may give trifling presents to their in-laws, but there is neither obligation nor coercion to do so.

562 858 Exceptions. Girls given to the marabouts by the naba are considered a kind of alms (saraka), and any children born of such unions belong to the true fathers and may not be disposed of by the chief.

644 357 858 Disposition of boys. Boys recruited as sogoné or samand'kamba are required to serve the naba faithfully, but they continue to belong to their real relatives from whom they annually receive cowries and particularly the fougoibga (blanket).

644 357 661 Although the sogoné are regularly fed and clothed by the naba -- because [168] a naba must always be surrounded by many pages -- this is not done for the samand'kamba. In many cantons and especially in Ouagadougou at the emperor's court, they receive only a meager pittance every two, three, four, or seven days since their role as "vagabond" or groom is supposed to provide them with ample opportunities to rob or rather to pillage the natives. During the winter the grooms and other samand'kamba go out into fields of maize and millet at night or in the morning, and there is general looting. As for any fowl lingering in the karaga (fields of millet near the huts), they are killed and hidden in the bundles of hay used to feed the horses. There are exceptions to this rule: some ministers of the emperor and canton chiefs give their samand'kamba at least one meal per day -- at night -- and during the winter, because they are doing field work, they are given cooked beans or sagbo (millet cakes) at noon.

644 357 608 In general way, however, it may be said that this type of servitor is not supported by the naba. Like the sogoné, the samand'biga chooses a mother at the court of the naba. He helps her cultivate her plot and performs other small services for her (weaving her clothes,

586 The new husband of a woman who has been deserted does not [186] and cannot maintain any relations whatever with the former husband. In any event, the latter would never agree to see his successor, even though the divorce had been arranged with his consent. Besides, the new marriage is often contracted in another village.

The Question of Nationality Among the Mossi

641 In Mossi country the child takes the father's nationality, and any child born of a Moaga subject is himself a Moaga.

593 Any child, male or female, is under the authority, first, of his father and, above him, of the head of the family. A mother may never, under any circumstances, give her daughter in marriage.

644 If a Moaga woman happens to marry a foreigner, she does not acquire her husband's nationality. In the same way, a foreign girl (a Bambara or a Djerma, for example) does not lose her own nationality when she marries a Moaga. In the eyes of her husband's relatives, as well as the rest of the populace, she remains a foreigner, required to practice the customs of her husband but nevertheless a foreigner.

Thus, when a Moaga subject chooses to emigrate, the nationality of his children who remain in Mossi territory, whether minor or of age, does not ipso facto change.

A legitimate child takes on his father's nationality [187] even though the foreign-born father may have a Moaga as his wife.

Children born of a Moaga father and either a Moaga or foreign-born mother are Mossi.

[848] As for illegitimate children, they take the mother's nationality unless they are recognized, and this can be done only if the mother marries before the birth of the child.

If the child has not been legitimized until after his birth, he will sooner or later suffer from the omission, since his bastard origin will not long remain a secret.

Loss of nationality. The Mossi may lose their nationality only under the following two conditions.

1. When the Moaga subject has been expelled from his village for some serious crime, sent away by his relatives, and no longer regarded

428 custom which decrees that he likewise inherits all of his father's responsibilities as head of the family.

Do daughters and wives share in an estate? Daughters have
428 no share in an estate although their brothers may give them
562 trifling gifts.

Wives never inherit from their husbands. They can only benefit indirectly as the representatives of their young sons. On the contrary, since the wife is considered a piece of property, [259] she is actually a part of the estate to the same extent as the rest of the property left by the deceased.

428 Disposition of an unclaimed estate. Only the canton chief is qualified to inherit the property of a deceased person having no known relatives.

Rights and Obligations Governing Property in the Family

421 Property is owned individually. Individual property is strictly a private matter. The head of the family has no rights over property acquired individually by the women and children or by other relatives under his rule. They may dispose of their possessions as they see fit. A mother may do some trading to provide savings for her children. The head of the family may not use such property under any circumstances without the consent of the true owner.

428 Does a husband inherit from his wife? A husband has no right
593 to his wife's property. He cannot even claim it if she dies childless, since in that case it goes to her own relatives (brothers or sisters) or, failing that, to their children.

428 Aside from their rights in their father's estate, children inherit their mother's property.

When the head of a family borrows cowries from [260] a
[426] member of his compound, he must repay the loan with a given time. His own property is inalienably his as long as he lives, and then it makes up his estate, along with his wives.

768 Disposition of a house after death. When the head of a com-
428 pound dies, the establishment is not destroyed. It automatically passes to the heirs, that is, to his sons or, if he has no legitimate

695 tomb and force him to drink water in which earth from the grave had been diluted. This test was greatly feared, for the Mossi believe that the deceased will come and take his revenge.

The defendant went free unless his guilt was proved by witnesses. When arguments arose about the ownership of fields, domestic animals, etc., each person concerned would give his arguments and summon his witnesses, and the judges made a decision on the basis of the discussions. If two women quarreled, their husbands were supposed to get together and reach a decision. The province chief judged disputes
692 concerning marriage. For instance, if a girl had been promised to someone and the bride price was paid in part, and then her father changed his mind and gave her to another, the disappointed suitor could appeal to the province chief, who saw to it that the payment was returned. If the defendant ran away to avoid trial, he could only be tried in absentia if witnesses deposed against him.

696 /25/ The sentence was carried out as far as possible, even in the
691 absence of the convicted party; if he returned, the trial was not re-
672 opened but he could appeal to the province chief. The family is held responsible in every case. If the sentence includes a fine, and if the convicted person's property is insufficient, the property of his relatives is seized. People are held accountable for their children's debts, and if the defendant runs away, one of his relatives is seized in his place. On the other hand, the head of the family is the absolute master and the judge of the family. He must pay his children's debts and the fines they have incurred, but he may chastise them, even put them to death, or banish and curse them, a punishment which as a rule is greatly feared. All this indicates the strength of the family ties, which we shall study in the second part of this work. The naba saw to the execution of the sentence pronounced by the court; the executive and judicial powers were vested in the same person. If anyone refused to pay his debts or to pay the inflicted penalty, he was stripped of his property. No commutation of the sentence was allowed, and the person condemned to irons or to death had to suffer the sentence himself and could not go free by paying a fine or by substituting a slave. Capital punishment was carried out in public. The province chief was entitled to grant a pardon, but, of course, he made use of this right quite rarely. A man's life counts for so little in the eyes of the Black!

[513]

[761]

562 girl is used to pay debts; a man borrows on the promise of giving his
584 daughter in marriage. She will be handed over, often with no bride
567 price other than the borrowed sum; and, contrary to the custom noted above, since she is considered a slave, her first daughter does not belong to the grandfather. A girl may also be given in exchange for her enslaved brother or uncle, who thus recovers his freedom. A man may be seriously ill and call a doctor who agrees to treat him on the condition that the patient's daughter be given to him if he gets well. The father does recover, and the girl is given in marriage to the fortunate doctor. Exchange of daughters also takes place: a native may give his daughter in marriage to another, who in turn gives him his own.

562 A girl is given in marriage by her mother only if she was born out
584 of wedlock, and her father is thus theoretically unknown. The sisters
848 of certain nabas are the only ones permitted to choose their husbands
[554] according to their own wishes and to leave them when they please.
593 The fickle existence they lead is easy to imagine! In all other cases the girl is given in marriage by her father, or by his heir if the father is dead. (1) The mother is not consulted, but since she cares for the

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1. It would be onerous and indeed impossible to list all the various situations that may arise. The sorcerers quite often interfere, and who knows what goes through a sorcerer's mind! One case among many: a woman bore a daughter after raising several others who died immediately following marriage; the father consulted the sorcerer to find out whether he should promise this last daughter in marriage. The sorcerer stated that she must be left free to choose her own husband, or else she would die like her sisters. The father left her free.

daughter until the latter marries, she may through advice, promises, or even threats dissuade her from a certain match /29/ or welcome her if she runs away from a husband to whom she was given against her will.

584
583 have borrowed. In addition, he would expose himself and the preferred suitor to the vengeance of the rejected one.

583 The bride price is not exorbitant. The total gifts, spread over a period of years, amount to some fifty francs, without counting the work days. Nevertheless, it requires sufficient means to secure at least the necessary cowries. Besides, the child's father prefers to give her to someone who already boasts a certain fame and some wealth, in short, to an elderly man. /30/ This is why children are promised to old dotards, and white-haired men are paired with young girls; while the old men's sons of marriageable age cannot get wives. If the father has the means to pay the bride price, he carefully refrains from helping his son, even if the latter has found a match to his liking.

587 It is true that all the father's wives are inherited by the oldest son,
578 who gives some to his younger brothers; but this occurs only at the old man's death, and this may not happen for a long time. This ex-
593 plains why the oldest son wishes for his father's death, and why the father sends the son away for fear of a premature end. It is only fair to add that some men, with a better understanding of their own interests, marry off their sons as soon as they are old enough.

595 Polygamy exists among the Mossi as in all Black countries. The
[556] wealth of a man is gauged by the number of his wives. Women furnish hands to till the soil, for the wife works in the fields like the husband. Women also furnish children, and if these are daughters, young men will come to offer their services (dakonré) and one day take the girls in marriage; or the father will receive gifts. If the children are boys, they will later aid the father in his work. In these countries where each lives for himself alone, where selfishness reigns supreme, polygamy is easily explained, but it undoubtedly results in a lower birth rate. White-bearded old men cannot have children as numerous and sound as young men in their prime, and the latter, deprived of wives, wear themselves out with their excesses. It is true that those who can afford a dozen wives are few; most have to be content with two, three, or four. Some nabas, nevertheless, own veritable herds of women, and this is certainly a grievous abuse. Their wives are numbered in the hundreds. The greatest moral dis-
[837] order reigns in those harems, where the boys who serve as grooms and pages spend most of their time among their master's wives. This explains the precautions taken by the women's owners and the eunuchs of the Moro Naba, as well as the Poënaba and his sinister duties.

596 heir but to the oldest member of the family. Nothing is done without consulting the family head, and even if a member of the family occupies an important post, he continues to show the greatest deference toward his family head, his elder. This is why the present prime minister of Koupéla, the Saman'Naba, leaves the prerogatives of a family head to his uncle; he does not take the liberty of offering sacrifices on the Day of the Dead, and he consults his elder on all
596 matters which fall within his jurisdiction. The head of the family,
681 however, does not have the right of life or death over its members or over his own wives. Even if the latter steal or commit adultery, they may not be put to death; only the district chiefs may kill their own wives. A husband or family elder may beat them, put them in irons, or even more rarely /35/ turn them out of the household, but he may not kill them. Also, the family head may not dispose of the family property, nor force his kin to hand it over. He may, however, request his relatives to help him pay his debts or obtain a wife, but he may not force them to do so. Nevertheless, they always help him as best they can.

●593 Children are directly subject to their father. While the latter
596 consults the family head whenever he must make a serious decision, the children consult their father, who in turn goes to the family head, who often goes to the village chief, who resorts to the canton chief, who consults the head of the province if the matter warrants it. Mature reflection thus precedes every serious decision.

593 The father is the absolute master of his children. He has the right of life or death over them, and sometimes he made use of this right, especially when a child was born deformed or became an incorrigible thief. He sees to the marriage of his daughters. He may exchange them for other women, or he may give them in marriage to a creditor in order to pay his debts. He may place his sons in the service of a relative or friend. The eldest son seldom remains in his father's household, especially if the father is wealthy or a naba; the father is too afraid that his son may do away with him, the sooner to come into his inheritance. "To give one's son to another man is a convenient way to get rid of the problem of his marriage; it will become the concern of the boy's master.

861 Fathers take little part in the education of their children. Daughters always remain with their mothers until their marriage. Sons help their father as soon as they are old enough to work, but they never

861 receive any advice from him. The Mossi, fathers and mothers alike, do not know how to train their children. Under the pretext that a small child does not know what he is doing, the parents allow him to do as he pleases and to carry out his every whim without punishment. Tots who can barely articulate two words utter the coarsest insults to their mother and beat her with their small fists without being punished. The onlookers merely remark that some day he will be a fighter. To chastise him would be to make him cry, and a child's tears are always an embarrassment to be avoided as much as possible. When a child behaves badly, when he fights, steals, seeks out the company of professional thieves or young scamps, when he tells everybody what he has seen and heard and cannot keep a secret, when complaints are made against him, then his father and mother punish him and warn him not to do it again; but they do not prevent wrong doing, and [672] if necessary they will pay his debts, because all members of the family, especially the father, are held liable. The father does not teach his son the cult and the sacrifices, but he does request the boy's help. The child watches his father, and when he grows up, he does as his father did.

857 Boys of twelve or fifteen may fail to return home in the evening for any reason whatever, without warning, and no one worries about it: "He will come soon enough." The young man of twenty builds 884 himself a hut apart from his father's house, in order to have greater 593 freedom and to receive any visitors he may want. Besides his father's field, he cultivates his own piece of land and sells the produce /36/ himself in order to buy clothes. His father feeds him but rarely presents him with gifts of clothing when he is old enough to work for himself. If he weaves cloth during the dry season, he may do with it as he pleases, sell it or make clothing. His father has no say in the matter. It is the father, however, who teaches his sons how to 868 593 cultivate the soil, how to plait mats, and sometimes how to weave. If the father works at a trade, he teaches it to his sons: the drummers teach their children to beat the drum and to sing the chief's praises; the jewellers and smiths teach their sons their respective professions.

593 The father usually is fond of his children and likes to play with them when they are small. He watches over them while the mother does her household tasks. Parents sincerely lament their children's death, and children that of their siblings. Undoubtedly there are parents with the greatest indifference toward their offspring, but such

593 cases are rare. Less rare are the children who care little for their parents. Nevertheless, old people are usually treated well and with 888 great respect. A son who abandons his old father or mother is held in very poor esteem. A woman prefers to bear daughters who will help her in her daily work, but she hopes for one or two sons with whom she may live when she is old.

857 The girls live with their mother. As soon as they can walk, they 883 follow her to the stream and return with a gourd of water on their 482 heads. As they grow, so does the gourd, and little girls carry water 312 jars weighing from fifteen to twenty kilograms. At home, young girls mill grain to feed the whole family, tend the fire, stir the sauce, wash the dishes and the clothes, sweep, in short, attend to all the household tasks under their mother's guidance. The only task of a woman with two or three half-grown daughters is to supervise their work. Because they are always with their mother, the young girls are usually more responsible and better behaved than the boys. Unfortunately they make up for this later, and more often than not, it is on their own initiative that they go at night to the young men's huts. A young man may give presents to a girl who has already been promised in marriage, and he may do so in front of her mother, who says nothing.

857 Boys help their father as soon as they are strong enough. Younger 883 boys follow their older brothers into the bush as soon as they can and 231 help them herd the sheep and goats. These boys go out every morning, before the sun has dried the dew, to look for new termite nests full of insects which the chicks are fond of eating. During the dry season, they cut down and plait grass to cover the roofs; if they are old enough, they even cut the firewood. When a little older, if their father or the person with whom they live owns a horse, they watch over it, take it to the stream to water it and to wash it, go into the bush to cut grass for it, and clean the stables. During the winter when the grass is green, each of the horses of a rich naba is cared for by three or four children. Some of them cut the grass, others /37/ stuff it almost by force into the horse's mouth, while one little boy drives the flies away with a stick to which a sort of flexible leather sole is attached. The winter season is a fine time for horses, who grow fat and heavy. Unfortunately, the Black does not think of the future and does not foresee how much dry grass will be needed to bridge the dry season; as a result, the horses suffer a great deal from hunger at that time.

535 /38/ To tell the truth, however, the Mossi do not know how to dance. With the exception of the circumcision dance and of some villages of dancers where people devote themselves methodically to choreography, the greater part of the population do not know how to dance gracefully. This does not prevent them, one and all, from indulging in the dance. Men and women dance separately. The most common male dance consists of a rapid motion of the upper part of the body, from left to right and right to left; the feet do not leave the ground, and they are moved forward very slowly. The arms are bent up to shoulder height and away from the body; the fingers are extended, and arms and hands shake along with the rest of the body. When performed by professionals, who are sometimes found in the villages, this motion is rather graceful but lacks breadth of style.

[292] The dancers wear a cardboard headpiece, its crest adorned with a band of cowries and its sides often embellished with bits of mirror fragments, feathers, and all sorts of small, gaudy articles. The upper part of the body is covered with a tight, wide-meshed garment, decorated at the waist with pompons or cowries and small bells. The dancer wears

[301] on the middle finger a piece of iron which looks like a large clam shell, and on his thumb an iron ring. He strikes one against the other in rhythm. His wrist is often adorned with a bracelet made of several of these iron shells; hanging from them are small strips of the same metal which clang at the slightest motion. Those who do not have a costume deck themselves out in tawdry finery.

The women dance two at a time, each by herself, spinning around and assuming whatever poses they consider most graceful. When they come near one another, they turn around and strike their backs together; then one of the two withdraws, and another takes her place. All the while, the women spectators clap their hands in rhythm and sing. Sometimes one of them utters a shrill cry to arouse the dancers or to laud one who has proved unusually graceful and lithe.

[831] There are no special dances for the dead, and Mossi dances apparently do not have the obscenity of some Negro dances.

857 But to return to the children. It may be stated, as a general rule, that children can do as they please as long as they help out with everyday tasks, as long as the son helps his father and the daughter her mother. Happily there are exceptions to this, and some parents watch their children quite closely, but these are exceptions. Boys

● 593 prefer their mother to their father, because the latter must often

593 reprimand them, while the mother's role, here as elsewhere, is to indulge her children.

595 The children of different wives are quite fond of one another and often exchange help. When the father dies, the eldest son make no distinction among his brothers and helps them all as best he can. Polygamy seems to present no drawbacks in this respect.

When a man has several wives, his first wife (porkyéma) is mistress of the household rather than his mother. All the other wives are on an equal footing, even the slaves, excepting, of course, those for whom the husband has a special preference. As the number of wives increases, so does the authority of the first wife, who wants /39/ her husband to have as many wives as possible. Each wife has a separate hut where she lives with her children, and this avoids many a quarrel. The husband goes to the hut of the woman he desires, or he has her come to his own hut. When a man works in his field, all his wives and children must help him, because he feeds them all and gives them a daily millet ration; it is, accordingly, only fair that all should take part in agricultural work within the limits of their capacity.

593 443 421 Provided that a woman remain at her husband's disposal and help him in the fields, she is free to do as she pleases. She goes to market to sell the grain, the spices for sauce, and the thread to weave cloth, but the husband sells the fabric strips and the raw cotton. During the winter each woman may have her own field to cultivate with her children, and the harvest belongs wholly to her. The husband has no say in the matter. If the woman spins cotton, she sells it at the market or even to her husband; if she brews beer, she offers one jar to her husband, but if he entertains friends and wants additional jars, he must pay cash for them. It is not unusual for a woman to refuse her husband credit, for who knows when he would pay?

593 574 A woman may visit her relatives with the permission of her husband, who sets a return date. The woman rarely comes back on the date set, and the husband goes to fetch her himself, or he sends one of his friends with a piece of salt or a small gift. A woman especially likes to visit her relatives when she is pregnant or shortly after the baby's birth. She knows that she will be well cared for and especially that she will enjoy complete freedom. As a result, it is not unusual for a woman to leave her husband for several months and to return only after considerable coaxing. Most quarrels between one Mossi and another derive from their wives and from their debts; yet it may not be said, as a general rule, that women are unhappy or ill treated. [578]

839 especially, subsisted upon it. The victims, children from twelve
439 to fifteen years old, were provided by the Moro Naba, who kept
304 them afterward or sold them to the Haoussa.

In 1900 our ambassador to Turkey learned that a shipment of eunuchs which had reached Constantinople had originated in Mossi territory, which we had occupied since 1896. He warned the Minister of Foreign Affairs, who notified his colleague the Minister of the Colonies. Strict orders were issued to put an end to this Mossi industry, which has since ceased to exist.

439 Let us finally add the grain trade, which is unusual in Mossi territory. In the years 1906, 1907, and 1908 which saw poor harvests, however, the Mossi were forced to acquire grain in Yatenga (Ouahigouya circle) and in Gourounsi territory by selling livestock.

We have now concluded our discussion of Mossi occupations. Let us proceed to a study of the family and the superposed social organisms.

Chapter II

The Mossi: The Family, Public Powers, and Religion

593 We must state first that the Mossi family is a partly decommunalized family. This may come as a surprise in view of the foregoing section on work (cultivation predominates, stockbreeding is poor, industries flourish, trade is nonexistent), which had led us to expect something altogether different. Nevertheless, this is a fact.

The family is even highly decommunalized, although not everywhere to the same degree. In this respect, five different family types are to be found.

596 The first two are quite rare. They would seem to be witnesses
326 to an ancient state of affairs which has now vanished. Thus, one finds the common patriarchal type among those blacksmiths who are gathered into /special/ quarters or even villages and whom we mentioned in the section on industries. This type is found only among them and not among isolated blacksmiths, where only the common Mossi family type occurs.

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326 As we can see, the common patriarchal family is found among those blacksmiths who live in groups.

592
596 The second Mossi family type is one we had occasion to mention here and there in the section on work. Contrary to the first type, which is found only in a special section of the population, this one occurs throughout the Mossi but as a rare /544/ and exceptional case. All the households in the family still live together, but every household works for itself. This is the type we studied among the Nankana and other groups of cultivator-breeders under the name of Nankana type No. 3 /not translated/.

593
592 We come now to those Mossi family types which are widespread rather than exceptional. They correspond to the Nankana type No. 4 (every household lives separately and works separately), or rather they depart from it in the direction of even greater decommunalization. There are three variants, namely, one that corresponds to the pure Nankana type No. 4, and two where decommunalization is more accentuated. Let us describe them in turn.

Here is the first variant:

593
592 1. The households live separately. As soon as a young man marries, he settles on his own with the help of his family.

596 When a family head gives one of the family's sons a wife, he uses a vacant soukala if there is one available. If there is none, the son builds a new soukala with the help of his father and of the family head.

2. Every household works separately (except for the clearing of family fields), procures its own food, clothing, and subsistence. The married son, however, comes and helps his father a little now and then. During the dry season, for example, he helps him repair the soukala. Or else he offers him small gifts from time to time.

When someone, on marrying, settles separately, the head of the family usually gives him some family field that was once cleared and cultivated and has since lain fallow.

3. Although households work separately, the children of the households are not given in marriage by their father and mother, but by the head of the family. The latter buys wives for the boys,
[583] but he also gives the daughters in marriage and receives the bride price.

596 with the help of his father and family head (which is by far the
423 most frequent occurrence), /548/ while in such a case it had for-
178 merly been considered family property. Finally, the soukala came to be regarded in every case as personal property and to be transmitted for that reason to the oldest son. This, incidentally, is the same evolution that applied to property in general, as we shall see shortly.

593 Now, here is the third and last variant of the prevailing Mossi family type. Nowadays, this variant is by far the most widespread.

1. Every household lives separately, works separately, and procures its own food and subsistence. The help of neighbors is enlisted to clear the fields.

584 2. Every household gives its own children in marriage. The family head no longer does so.

593 As soon as a man has a son, he chooses a little girl who will go to the boy when he reaches puberty. He visits the girl's relatives from time to time and offers them gifts.

584 When the girl is old enough to be married, he takes 50,000
583 cowries (if he is wealthy), skirt cloths, salt, kola nuts, and gives it
593 all to the relatives. Then, the old women in the daughter's family lead her to the home of the betrothed man's relatives. The father kills a sheep, makes a lot of couscous, buys dolo to celebrate her arrival. Then he offers the girl six or seven baskets containing respectively 1,000, 2,000, 3,000, 4,000, 5,000, 6,000, and 7,000 cowries. The young man himself gives his betrothed four or five skirts. If he is very wealthy, he gives her one or two little girls as slaves.

585 On the evening when the wedding is celebrated, the father asks
[926] one of his neighbors to lend him a hut, and the young married pair are sent there all alone (they will remain there as long as their soukala is not built). On the morrow, the feasting begins. People dance and feast for seven days at the gates of the father's soukala, at least when the girl is a virgin. If she is not, the feasting is curtailed but nevertheless lasts for another three days.

583 When the father is poor, he offers a few kola nuts to the girl's
591 /549/ father (six or ten). He gives the father and mother some firewood he gathered in the bush, straw to make séko /Tr.: mats/ for door, 2,000 cowries, a skirt cloth. He kills a sheep to make

583 591 couscous, which he offers to the relatives. Then he takes the girl away. He asks a neighbor for a hut to harbor the young couple on their wedding night and over the next few weeks. They stay there for only a month or two, until their soukala is built.

583 The bride price actually varies from region to region among the Mossi. We have just seen it range from 2,000 to 50,000 cowries. Earlier, we saw it set at 25,000. At Kombisiguiri it amounts to a mere 1,000. The young man's father visits the young girl's father with a chicken and 500 cowries; then he comes to see him a second time, again with a chicken and 500 cowries. There is no other bride price. Those who do not have a chicken to offer replace it with a bundle of firewood or a straw séko. In short, a girl here is worth 30 sous (the two chickens being worth 0.50 franc between them, and the 1,000 cowries amounting to one franc).

591 [431] Among rich people the young couple may remain seven, nine, or even twelve months in their neighbors' house. They present the latter with gifts, and during this period of time they proceed to build a soukala, or rather to have one built. The young man's father helps his son in this undertaking.

593 431 626 The young husband, now settled on his own, will henceforth work on his own account. He has become in turn the head of a soukala, but if he obtains a lot of millet or other grain he offers gifts to his father. If he becomes wealthy and makes no such gifts, the neighbors will insult him. He always makes gifts, therefore, for fear of being insulted. A son who marries, as a rule, builds his soukala as near as possible to that of his father.

593 Finally, let us add that the father usually buys his son's kitchen utensils when the boy settles on his own.

428 593 3. When the head of a family dies, the younger brother inevitably takes command of the family, but all the property, whatever its nature, goes to the children of the deceased and more especially to his oldest son. There is no longer any family real estate or movable property, or else nothing is regarded as such any longer.

/550/ The eldest son takes his father's soukala and everything that goes with it, fields, slaves, livestock, father's wives. He shares them, however, with his brothers and even with his sisters.

428 As for the soukala itself, he keeps it. He leaves his own
593 soukala, along with everything he owns, to come and live in the soukala of the deceased. In order to put the soukala he is leaving to some use, however, he sends one of his unmarried brothers (that is to say, one who lived up to that time with the deceased) to settle there. He immediately gives this brother one of his father's wives, one of the wives in the estate, and sends him, thus married, to settle in the soukala he is leaving.

593 I asked my informant why the father does not keep his oldest
578 married son with him instead of having him build a new soukala on the outside, since the son returns to the paternal soukala anyway when the father dies. The Mossi chief I was questioning replied that if the father kept his oldest son by his side, the latter, when married and growing older, would wish for his father's death in order to become independent. Wishing for his father's death, he might be tempted to bring it about. If settled in his own soukala, on the other hand, the head of a household and independent, he would nurture no ill thoughts against his father.

593 We shall see later that this feeling of fear and suspicion toward
578 the eldest son is carried to an extreme among the Moro Nabas. This
644 is understandable, since kingship is inherited. Once married, therefore, the eldest son of the prince went far from his father, to a soukala of his own and remained there until the Moro Naba's death.

428 As for the father's fields, the eldest son keeps them all if he is
593 able to work them all. If he is not able to do so, he gives the surplus over and above what he can work to his brothers.

As far as livestock is concerned, the eldest son gives some to his younger brothers and even to his sisters.

The same applies to slaves and cowries.

428 As for wives, if there are many, he gives some to his younger
593 brothers. Thus, for example, if there are ten wives and he has two
587 brothers, he gives two wives to each /551/ brother and keeps six for himself (let us add that the deceased, before dying, often gives a wife to his younger brother or brothers).

428 To summarize, the eldest son gets the soukala and the fields.
593 As for movable property, he takes about 50 percent and leaves the other half to the younger sons and to the daughters. There is a sharing, therefore, although a very uneven one.

428 593 184 Actually, those shares vary from region to region among the Mossi. Thus, in certain areas, the oldest son gets the soukala, the fields, two thirds of the livestock, cowries, and money, all the slaves and grain, as well as clothing, jewelry, weapons, horses, etc. The other sons get the remaining goods. The daughters get nothing. As for the wives, the oldest son takes three quarters and the other sons one quarter. In such cases, the eldest son is much more heavily favored than in the cases mentioned earlier.

At Kombisiguiri, this is even more accentuated. The oldest son may keep everything if he wishes. He may also give something to the other sons of the deceased or to the latter's brothers.

In short, at the stage /of evolution/ with which we are dealing, the transmission of property ranges from a complete and absolute law of primogeniture to an uneven sharing heavily tipped toward the eldest son.

593 736 Let us add that when the eldest son receives an estate, if his brothers are not yet of an age to be married, he keeps them at his home, in his own household (this is why, although Mossi households in principle include only a husband, his wives, children, and slaves, sometimes they also contain young unmarried brothers). In the morning they work for him, and in the afternoon they work their own little plots. The older brother provides them with food at all times, but not with clothes. They must procure their clothing with the returns from their own little plots. When they reach marriageable age, the older brother buys them a wife and helps them settle on their own.

429 593 When the head of a soukala dies leaving only small sons, his younger brother takes all the property for the time being but saves it for the legitimate heirs. When the eldest son of the deceased has grown up, the brother leaves the soukala and returns to his own former one, taking only his own belongings. /552/ At that time, all the real estate and movable property devolve to the oldest son and partly to the other sons.

428 593 If the head of a soukala leaves no sons but only brothers and daughters, the inheritance is shared between his younger brother and his daughters. The younger brother takes the soukala, the fields, and the wives. He leaves his own soukala and settles in that of the deceased, where he brings all his belongings. He puts up either a

428 593 son or a young brother of marriageable age in his former soukala. The daughters, however, get the movable property such as slaves, livestock, grain, cowries, etc. (with the exception of wives).

The oldest daughter takes the largest share. Out of ten beeves she will take six (if there are three daughters, for example) and the two younger daughters will take two each. Out of four slaves she will take two, and the two younger daughters will take one each. Out of 1,000 cowries, the oldest will take 600, the other two 200 each.

The same thing applies if there are no brothers but only daughters and brothers' sons, since the latter have the same rights as their fathers. Thus, it is the eldest son of the younger brother who inherits along with the daughters of the deceased.

593 In this third variant of the Mossi family, in short, the bonds that connect the various households in the family are now of two kinds only:

1. There are the religious bonds, since the head of the entire family remains the high priest of this collectivity.

593 672 2. There are also the judicial bonds (collective responsibility of the family in case of injury done to other people).

"If a man is in debt," says Moulins, p. 34, op. cit. /Monographie du cercle de Ouagadougou/, "his family is held responsible for payment. If he commits a misdemeanor, his family is held responsible for financial reparation.

"If he commits a crime of murder, one of his relatives will be put to death in his place if he has not himself been seized (at least, this is what happened prior to our occupation).

"When the head of the family is served a complaint against one of the individuals under his authority, he appeals first, of course, to the guilty party himself if the latter owns /553/ any property, then to the soukala to which the man belongs, then to the one headed by his nearest relative, etc. Vis-à-vis third parties, however, the family itself, as a whole, is held responsible for reparation.

"The formidable responsibility devolving to the family entails, as its logical counterpart, putting at its disposal, powers sufficient

593 672 to guard against dangers resulting from the obligation to make reparation for injuries committed by one of its members. This has led naturally to a recognition of the family's right, in the person of its head, to take whatever measures are necessary for the preservation of its common interests. Prior to our occupation, such measures could go as far as putting in irons or even putting to death an individual who called upon the collective responsibility of the family too frequently or too onerously, and thus threatened to endanger its equilibrium. The decision of a family head involving the [443] death sentence or putting in irons for life for one of his people, however, only became final with the naba's approval. The latter could oppose it by assuming financial responsibility, in the family's stead, for all future misdemeanors committed by the person he had pardoned."

593 174 We come now to an interesting although extremely ticklish subject, namely, the causes of the partial decommunalization of the Mossi family.

If we look at the present workaday life of these people, their decommunalization seems inexplicable in view of the fact that we are dealing with a group of cultivators, somewhat indolent to be sure, but nevertheless cultivators first and foremost. The Mossi, on the other hand, are not herdsmen. They are very mediocre stock-breeders. Among them as among other Blacks of West Africa, hunting merely accounts for a small percentage of their total food-producing activities. They are not traders, either. We see nothing here, therefore, that might explain the decommunalization of the family, and we must refer back to the previous workaday life of this people. We saw earlier, however, that while the present Mossi population originated /554/ from the fusion of two disparate elements, one of those elements was similar to the Bobo, Gourounsi, Habé, Kipirsi, etc., and thus deeply communal and patriarchal. It is obviously not from this element that the present decommunalization might stem.

Fortunately, there exists another and very different element. The Mossi who came from the Dagomba were, as we know, Blacks who were 1) warriors and conquerors, 2) breeders of horses, no doubt,

593 and very probably of large and small livestock as well. In this
174 respect they must have been strikingly similar to the present-day Toucouleur, who conquered part of West Africa in the nineteenth century and who are, like the Foulah of Guinea, half stockbreeders, half cultivators. (We shall review briefly those very Toucouleur in Chapter 4 of this book, to give the reader an idea of the Black conqueror on the active rather than the potential level, in a "pure state" rather than already fused into a heterogeneous conquered population /not translated/). Now war with its attendant loot, like stockbreeding, augments private property and allows individuals and households to secede from the family, at least to the extent permitted by the problems of cultivation and especially of field clearing. It is a fact that among the Toucouleur and Foulah, as among the Dagomba and Mossi, every household lives separately and works separately (except for that most difficult of all tasks to the Blacks, the clearing of fields). Thus, it must be concluded that the decommunalization of the present-day Mossi family derives from the ancient workaday life of the conquering segment of the population, which imposed its own customs on the conquered group. This workaday life consisted half of stockbreeding, half of cultivation as among the present-day Toucouleur and Foulah, with war and looting in addition as among the same groups up to quite recently.

Of course, we learn nothing that might shed light on the subject by questioning the Mossi themselves. My informants, for example, tell me that the various soukala in a family actually constitute but one family. I ask them why, then, do they not live together and do all their tilling together, like /555/ the Bobo, Gourounsi, Bambara, etc.? Because the women quarrel, they tell me. Those quarrels caused other fights among the men, and people ended up living separately. Of course, this could only have been a pretext for secession, and the true cause which made this secession possible, namely, the increasing individual wealth of the households, was something else again.

592 We shall close with a few details concerning the internal structure of the Mossi household. The latter includes, as we have stated above, the following members:

462 Beside cooking tasks, Mossi women have cleaning tasks. They
356 sweep the huts and soukala with handfuls of straw, small primitive brooms 30 or 40 centimeters long. They wash and bleach clothes and make soap. Finally, it is the women who spin cotton and tamp the floor of the huts.

356 This tamping is done as follows. "The natives spread on the surface to be tamped a layer, 10 centimeters thick, of a special black earth that consists chiefly /561/ of ashes and humus resulting from the decomposition of plants and household refuse.

"Above this, the Mossi spread a second layer consisting of clayey ferruginous gravel, from 3 to 5 centimeters thick. The small pebbles are subsequently reduced by heavy tamping to very fine material. Then, the natives spread a little water over this material and tamp again. Once this is done, they allow the floor to dry.

"This procedure is repeated several times, but ordinary water is replaced with néré water (the latter resulting from the infusion in hot water of the fragments of néré fruit, dondo in Mossi) or water into which cow dung has been mixed. When the last tamping and the last drying have been completed, the natives pour néré water in large quantities onto the new floor.

"Finally, the last procedure consists of polishing the surface with flat stones." (Cahier des rapports of the Ouagadougou circle).

593 The duties of Mossi women toward their husband are as follows:
833 1. The fulfillment of the conjugal duty.
562 "The wife," says Moulins, "must never shirk her conjugal duty except when she is pregnant or nursing.

"Should a woman evade her husband from newlywed shyness or for any other reason, he would use at first all means of persuasion within his command, and especially beg the wife's relatives to have a word with her. Should their exhortations prove vain, coercion would be used by beating the woman or putting her in irons. Finally, should those means fail to bring the wife to compliance, she could be turned out by her husband."

593 2. Faithfulness.
562 "The wife must live with her husband. If she abandons the conjugal domicile, her spouse has the absolute right to force her to return. /562/ If she takes refuge with her relatives, the latter must

593 not shelter her but must on the contrary return her to her husband.
562 If difficulties arise, the husband appeals to the naba, who forces the wife to return to her husband, at whose hands she will get a beating when she arrives....

"...The powers of a deceived husband over his wife's lover
593 were quite fearsome prior to our occupation. He could, at will,
837 either deal with the culprit himself or defer his complaint to the
684 naba. If he dealt himself with his rival and killed him, he handed out the adulterous woman to the Moro Naba and did not have to answer for his crime. If he merely wounded the man, no matter how seriously, he was regarded as having acted in the fullness of his rights as an injured husband, and he kept the wife and gave her a beating. If he appealed to the naba, the guilty pair were punished by being put in irons for a variable period of time. Furthermore, if the adultery had been committed with the wife of a dapouy naba of the Moro Naba (that is to say, a man to whom the Moro Naba had himself given some girl in marriage), the accomplice was compelled to pay the deceived husband a fine of 100,000 cowries.

"Finally, in case of adultery with a chief's wife, both culprits were put to death."

On this subject I find in my notes that prior to our occupation, when a naba was deceived by one of his wives, he killed her with
[762] poison and ordered the wife's lover to commit suicide. The latter did this by plunging the head of a poisoned arrow into the calf of his leg.

"It is plain," the author of the Monographie goes on to say, "that the lover was dealt with in the most rigorous manner of all. He could be put to death by the deceived husband in every case, while the wives of a chief were alone liable to supreme punishment. The lover could also be punished with a fine, in a single case anticipated by custom. Finally, he was invariably put in irons on the naba's orders if the deceived husband placed a complaint against him.

"As for the adulterous wife, except when she was /563/ handed over to the Moro Naba by her husband as reparation for the murder of her partner, punishment for her misdemeanor amounted merely to a more or less rigorous beating or to irons for a short period of time. She could, it is true, be turned out by her husband, but the latter

593 made use of this right quite rarely. The woman has productive
837 value in terms of children and labor. And then, in the majority
684 of cases, the husband would merely fulfill the dearest of his wife's desires by doing so."

593 While the Mossi wife has duties toward her husband, the latter
584 also has obligations toward his wives.

"A wife," says the Monographie, "has the right to demand from her husband more than mere platonic relations.

"Should the latter prevail, however, owing to the husband's impotence or illness, or simply as a result of ill will, the neglected wife would communicate the situation to the first wife of the family head, who would in turn inform her spouse.

"Should the husband's behavior be caused by physical incapacity, the woman would be taken from him and given to one of his brothers, or if there were none to his nearest relative, his sons excepted. Should his behavior be due merely to ill will, however, remonstrances would be made to him, and should these prove fruitless at the end of a few days, the woman would be considered free to return to her family."

593 Just as the husband owes his wives fulfillment of the conjugal
837 duty, he also owes them relative faithfulness.

"The husband has an obligation of relative faithfulness toward his wives, that of not keeping a concubine at the conjugal domicile.
[586] Should he transgress this rule, his wives would be fully entitled to obtain a divorce from him, unless he should agree to turn out his partner as a result of his wives' complaint or the intervention of the family head.

"This rule is strictly obeyed, except for the Mossi of the Kipirsi who allow the presence of the husband's concubines among his legitimate wives, and who have rules governing their respective positions.

"In any case the husband is everywhere allowed to /564/ deceive his wives as he pleases outside the conjugal domicile, and they are not entitled to complain about this in any way. Nevertheless, they nearly always have at their disposal a practically infallible although circuitous means of causing the greatest inconvenience to the fickle husband and his partner. As a result of the custom that pledges girls in marriage at a very early age, a husband can hardly commit

adultery except with a woman who is already married. A deceived wife who wishes to take her revenge need only reveal to the spouse of her husband's partner the criminal relations that victimize them both."

Let us add that another of the husband's duties is to render help to his wives' relatives if the latter are in needy circumstances.

Of course, the failure to fulfill these obligations could cause the wife to request a divorce. Divorce thus exists among the Mossi, although women rarely resort to it. The bride price is never claimed back by the husband, even if the woman has remained sterile. The children always devolve to the husband.

The husband, on the other hand, may turn out his wife, but Mossi husbands do not usually make use of this right.

Let us add that the matter of the girl's virginity at marriage is settled by the Mossi as by most other Blacks. If a girl is bought or betrothed from a very young age, she must preserve herself intact for her future husband. An unbetrothed girl, however, is free to use her own body when she reaches puberty, and if she marries later she cannot be reprimanded for having become a woman prior to her wedding.

Let us now proceed to the status of slaves.

Two kinds of slaves are distinguished among the Mossi, aside from the usual distinction between trade slaves and house slaves.

1. The daparé (etymologically, "followers," "men who walk behind their master," from da, "man" and paré, "behind"). They are unmarried slaves.

2. The bagaré ("men of the enclosure"). Those are married captives.

/565/ The daparé live with their master and always remain at his disposal for any work that may come up. They have no small individual plots, therefore, and their master provides them with food and clothing at all times. When they reach marriageable age, their master buys them a wife (or at least it was so in the old days; she would cost the master about 60,000 or 70,000 cowries), and then they settle on their own.

848 as soon as the baby is old enough to leave its mother, the husband, not wishing to keep it with him, will return the child to its natural father.

582 171 In short, virginity is not rigidly demanded of the girl, although it is considered better and more respectable than non-virginity. The Mossi are not as demanding on this point as the Bambara, and in this, according to my data, they are like all other Voltaic peoples.

684 Let us note one further detail. If the lover from whom reparation is demanded for the damage caused, that is to say, the payment of the goat, chicken, and two canari of dolo, does not want to give them, the husband would formerly appeal /242/ to the Moro Naba, who forced the lover to pay what he owed and in addition confiscated for himself a part of his goods for his salary as a judge. If the lover owned nothing, his family paid for him. Nowadays, the village or canton chiefs are still approached about such matters, and they force the lover to make the customary payment.

593 Rights and duties of the husband and wife. —The husband owes assistance and help to his wife. He must protect her and come to her aid whenever necessary.

The husband must support his wife. To secure food, he usually belongs to a work group, as we have seen earlier. The work group sustains the husband and wife for seven months out of twelve. The rest of the time, the husband maintains the wife with the produce of his small fields. The wife also has her own little patches of cultivated land (as big as a handkerchief), but they are not used to procure food for the household unless the husband is completely destitute. Hence, the produce from these little patches of soil usually goes to the wife herself.

In any case, it is the husband and not the group who must provide clothing for his wife. He does this with the earnings from his small fields.

593 586 If the husband should refuse to support his wife, although able to do so, she would take her complaint to the head of her spouse's family. If the husband still refused to support her after the intervention of the family head, the woman would regain her freedom and could return to her family.

593 The husband must see to his ailing or invalid wife's upkeep until her death.

593 The wife must obey her husband. The latter has the right to strike
562 her in case of disobedience, adultery, etc. He cannot break one of her limbs, or kill her.

595 Polygamy. —Polygamy is the general rule, at least theoretically. That is to say, the Mossi may have as many spouses as he wishes as long as he can minister to their needs.

595 In actual fact, only rich people have several wives. The majority
589 are monogamous by necessity, and there are even bachelors. As a passing remark, this applies to the Sudanese Negroes in general, for everywhere nature creates approximately as many men as women, and it is hard to visualize how in any one region each man could have several wives. However, in spite of the occurrence of bachelors and a large number of truly monogamous people, the question still stands. It is solved if we bear in mind that girls are married much earlier than men. This results in a much larger number of women than men "in active service," if I may be permitted to say so. Undoubtedly, this (along with the occurrence of bachelors and a considerable number of monogamists), takes care of the objection which naturally arises when we speak of polygamy. /243/

163 It may be, let us add, that the number of girls born here is a little higher than that of boys, as has been noted in England, for example.

595 By way of figures on polygamy, let us state that the Moro Naba
643 Bango, the last one who reigned before the arrival of the French, had
645 about 80 wives. The Naba Koboga, who ruled from 1902 to 1914, had 30 or 40. The present Rassam Naba, one of the ministers of the Moro Naba, has 30 or 35 wives. These are, of course, exceptional figures if the total population of Yatenga is taken into account. In any case, the rich men, notables, and men in easy circumstances always have several wives.

595 Organization of the polygamous household. —"The first wife," says Vadier, "enjoys a certain authority over the others. It is she who transmits her husband's orders to the other wives and who notifies him of their wants, who supervises the preparation of meals and apportions the food. In addition, it is she who comes and tells the [841] husband that such-and-such a wife is no longer in a state of zim and can now fulfill her conjugal duties.

"Aside from this special prerogative enjoyed by the first wife, all wives have the same rights and duties. In principle, each wife must share in turn her husband's bed. Nevertheless, he is free to summon his favorite wife during the day."

803 The conjugal duty. —The wife owes her husband the fulfillment of the conjugal duty.

The wife must never evade it except when she is unwell, pregnant, or when she is nursing. We can see, therefore, that among the Mossi in particular and among the Sudanese in general (for the same customs prevail in this area among all Sudanese Negroes) there is great tactfulness. One appreciates this all the more if one bears in mind that [853] here the women suckle their children for two or three years.

"If," says Vadier, "a woman should evade her husband from newlywed shyness or from any other motive, he would first use all the means of persuasion at his command and, especially, beg the wife's relatives to speak to her. Should their exhortations prove vain, constraint [593] would be used by giving the wife a beating or putting her in irons. Finally, should these measures fail to bring the spouse to compliance, [586] she could be turned out by her husband.

"In return, the husband owes the wife the same conjugal duty which he has the right to demand from her.

"Should the husband fail to fulfill it because of impotence, sickness, or simply from ill will, the neglected wife would mention the matter to the family head's first wife, who would in turn notify him.

833 "Should the husband's behavior be caused by physical incapacity, 586 the wife would be taken from him and given to one of his brothers or, if there were none, to his closest male relative, but never to one of his sons. Should it be due merely to ill-feeling, a protest would be made, and should this fail to have any effect after several days, the wife would be allowed to return to her family." /245/

Let us state immediately that these contingencies almost never arise or are so rare as to be practically nonexistent. Custom anticipates them, however, and we have just described what happens when perchance they do arise.

562 Women's property. —Women may own individual property, as we 422 already know, goods which are not shared communally and which belong wholly to them. These goods come from various sources, sometimes the women's small plots of land, sometimes a surplus from the grain they are given to prepare food and which, once made into dolo, is sold for cowries. Sometimes also, the husband's munificence provides them with bracelets and other jewelry. Once given, this jewelry is wholly theirs, and it is added to the trinkets they procure with their own resources.

857 The people fined must give three or four canari of dolo (the usual 575 canari of dolo is worth 150 cowries, or three sous).

The members assemble to eat, to drink dolo, and to dance to the sound of the tom-tom at the compound belonging to the father of the society's Moro Naba. The girls are invited to come and dance.

[71] Among the Mossi of Yatenga, the nam do not have their own huts as do the Bambara ton and flambolo.

Little mock weddings are performed in the societies between the girls and boys. The young spouses offer each other small gifts of cowries, peanuts, cotton, etc.

Once married, the young girls withdraw from their society on account of their husband's jealousy. Married men, on the other hand, may remain in theirs and quite frequently do while they are young. Old men, however, are no longer members of the nam.

883 Young people's tasks. —Young men, after they are circumcised (at the age of 13 or 14), work in the compound or rather in the work group to which they belong on the same days and at the same hours as other members of the group.

They are provided with food by the head of the group seven months out of twelve and by their father five months out of twelve, and they are clothed by the latter.

They have their own little plots, but the produce does not belong exclusively to them. Their father and mother take what they need to feed or clothe the youth. The remainder is his. Boys can thus accumulate a little property of their own before they marry.

Young girls have no little plots of their own to cultivate. They learn how to till the soil by working with their mother in the fields of the work group and in the mother's little private plots. Hence, they are fed by the group seven months out of twelve and by their father and mother for five months, and they are clothed by their parents. The individual property they own consists mostly of trifling jewels usually received as gifts. /257/

• 593 Rights and duties of parents toward their children. —Paternal authority rests largely with the father of the child, but also partly with the head of the work group, the head of the compound, and the family head. This is understandable, since the child's support is ensured for the greater part of the time, except for clothing, by the work group and since lodging is ensured by the compound.

593 861 858 The right to discipline a child belongs principally to the father (but also to the heads of work group, compound, and family) or to the mother, depending on the age of the child.

"The mother," says Vadier, "has the right to discipline boys until they are circumcised, girls until they marry. This does not mean that the father cannot intervene during that time to reprimand or chastise one of his children, but that he nearly always leaves it to the mother.

"After the boy's circumcision and the girl's marriage, the right to punish belongs to the father and no longer to the mother."

593 858 672 The duty of surveillance belongs principally to the father, and secondly to the heads of the work group, compound, and family. One of its consequences is financial liability. If a child steals or commits some reprehensible act which may call for compensation, the father is primarily responsible and must indemnify the injured parties, after seizing whatever property the child may own.

593 858 443 Formerly, when a native could not manage to discipline a son or daughter whose behavior was very bad, he would hand the child over to the Moro Naba after consulting the family head and the family council. From that day forward he would give up his paternal authority, and the Moro Naba alone would hold it with broader prerogatives. If the child continued to commit extortion, the Moro Naba had the right to have him put to death. When it was a girl who was handed to the naba, the latter would give the father a woman of his own household in exchange if he happened to be favorably disposed toward him.

Now, since the French occupation, this is no longer done. In such cases, nowadays, the child is simply expelled from the compound and from the household.

858 593 A father could not give his child as security, nor could he pawn him temporarily as a slave.

593 429 858 Paternal authority is relinquished in two cases, actually very infrequent: (1) when the father goes insane; and (2) when he has committed incest.

In such a case, paternal authority passes to his oldest living brother, or, if there is no brother, to the oldest son. This guardian has exactly the same powers over the child as the father had.

858 In case of insanity, the children are required to help their father and mother /258/ and to attend to their needs. In case of incest, they have no obligations toward the guilty party.

593 684 The Moro Naba, after he has been notified by the family council, pronounces the forfeiture of paternal authority. In case of incest, the guilty party was driven out of the territory.

593 Duties of children toward their parents. —The children owe obedience to their father and mother. They also owe them respect.

Their labor obligations are distributed among the fields of the work group, the father's private fields, the mother's small private plots, and their own little plots. Naturally they work most on the large fields belonging to the work group.

304 881 Circumcision. —Circumcision is performed at the age of 13 or 14. It takes place in the month of December, hence during the dry, cool season. At this time the children are not needed to help in the fields, as they are in the winter season. This is also the case in the hot, dry season, but at that time the wounds would heal less quickly. This leaves the dry, cold season, which is excellently suited to the treatment of the circumcised, a time when the children have nothing whatever to do and the grown-ups very little.

304 621 593 881 Circumcision is performed on a certain number of children at the same time. When a small village is involved, all the children in the village are circumcised at once. When a large village is involved, the children in each quarter are circumcised together. The children themselves ask their big brother if they may be circumcised when they feel that they have reached a suitable age for this operation. The big brother decides and says yes or no.

304 326 881 —The children also set the exact date for the circumcision and go to the man who has charge of the operation to make the arrangements. In Yatenga, as a rule, he is a blacksmith (at Ouahigouya, for example, from the quarter of the Baloum-Naba). Sometimes, however, non-blacksmiths, either Foulsé or Mossi, perform the operation. When a performer of operations dies, he is replaced by someone who knows how to circumcise, either a brother or a son of the deceased or someone from another family.

304 881 Circumcision is not performed in the evening or at night, as happens among other Blacks of West Africa, but at six o'clock in the morning. A particularly kind man among the people of the quarter or of the village has been chosen by the children who are to be circumcised. He wakes them up on that morning and takes them to the man who is to perform the operation. Big brothers accompany their younger brothers, but the father and mother do not witness the operation and are not even

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he received from them. This unequal exchange, plus the nobles' prerogative of seizing the wives of pagans, contributed to the increase of the Moslems.

The conversion of Mossi to Islam is sometimes accompanied by a rupture in the relationships between persons involved in "friendships" with a view of obtaining wives. A great quarrel developed in the district between a pagan chief and a recent convert who refused to give the chief a daughter promised as a wife. The chief became furious and claimed that the Moslem had broken a promise made years ago, but the Moslem claimed that it was against his new religion to give his daughter to a pagan. It is not true that Moslems in the village do not exchange wives with pagans, but the Moslems often try to convert their pagan friends so that the brides will not have to revert to paganism. The chief's difficulty was that he could not become a Moslem because of his ritual and ceremonial relationship with the ancestors. The Moslem men do not have such difficulties with their pagan wives because most women follow their husbands' dictates in religious and other matters. Many Moslem men attempt to prevent their wives from having sacrifices made to the ancestors, but if a woman really wishes such a sacrifice she can easily have it arranged through her pagan relatives. If a woman married to a Moslem refuses to observe Islamic practices, she is liable to divorce and runs the risk of having her children taken away.

Mossi anxiety over children is often instrumental in converting them to Islam. When a woman is barren or her young children die, she consults a soothsayer (*barga*). She is either told that her Tengkougre benefactor was not amply rewarded and recalled the children, or that her "Moslem" children (children who wished to be Moslems) were angry because they were given pagan names. In the latter case she is advised to make a gift to a Moslem and to ask her husband to build a Moslem prayer-circle outside his hut so that when her children "return" (are born again) they will see it. Finally, she is advised to give all her children Moslem names. I could discover no reason why the pagan soothsayers advise these anxious parents to adopt Islam, except that they hope that complicated prescriptions will be more efficacious. Nevertheless, so effective is this technique for gaining converts to Islam that even members of the family of the chief pagan priest are not immune to it. Furthermore, once a woman has a Moslem child, all her other children must be Moslems or they will die. A man whose children are all Moslem has no recourse except to adopt Islam if he wants a funeral, because his Moslem sons may not give him a pagan funeral.

Every Mossi, whether Moslem or non-Moslem, wishes a proper funeral, and now that travel has increased the fact of being Moslem or pagan is of great importance. Many young migrants to Ashanti have reported that their dead pagan comrades were unceremoniously disposed of, while the local Christians and Moslems took care of their dead coreligionists. But despite this fact, and the belief of administrators and missionaries, I found no evidence that the seasonal and other migration of Mossi youth to Ghana and the Ivory Coast have contributed very much to the spread of Islam. It is true that some of the thou-

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tradition of hostility. Such groups obviously have both equal and mutually independent status.

The Processes of Mossi Joking

I have already suggested that the significance of joking as an adjustive mechanism is derived from the manner in which it provides concurrently for the operation of three interrelated but analytically separable processes. These are *communication, control,* and *catharsis.*

As a means of communication, joking provides a permissive and flexible context in which a grievance can be expressed, thus allowing for its rectification and the restoration of amity. As a means of control, the public nature of most joking serves to shame the object of the jocular offensive, to invoke social pressure for his conformity, and to elicit support for the complainant. As a means of catharsis, the joking expression of aggressive feelings reduces frustration and thus serves indirectly to perpetuate the amicable aspect of the relationship in which it occurs.

Joking also gives pleasure. The feeling of triumphant release that follows the successful—and safe—expression of hostile sentiments probably functions to reinforce reliance on joking as an adjustive mechanism. And the intrinsic pleasure of wit may also explain the persistence of joking behavior in the absence of an immediate "structural need" for it.

A more detailed description of one of the relationships already mentioned—sibling-in-law joking—will serve to illustrate these several points. Because of its relation to the pivotal institution of marriage, sibling-in-law joking is perhaps the most frequently used adjustive mechanism in Mossi social structure. The potential for marital conflict is high. This appears to be due to the combined factors of a sexually differentiated enculturative experience that results in marked dissimilarities in adult male and female personality; to an age difference between husbands and wives of at least ten years; to the classic stresses of polygyny; to the subordinate status of Mossi women, particularly of junior wives within their husband's patriclan; and to the possible dissatisfaction of a woman's parents, particularly her mother, at the loss of their daughter's services or at the inadequacy of bride-wealth payments.

Whatever its origins in a specific instance, it is important that this potential for conflict be controlled, for each marriage extends the network of affinal and cognatic ties that link the patrilineage to the larger community. Given a persistent potential for strife, the preservation of marital stability requires the provision of a means for minimizing its deleterious effects. When conflict occurs, the resultant frustration must be reduced, and accord must be reestablished in a manner that does no serious damage either to the marriage itself or to the larger context of social relations in which it is embedded. Sibling-in-law joking helps to accomplish this.

If, for example, a Mossi is irritated by his wife's performance of some aspect of her duties in the household or the field, he need not address her directly in order to communicate his dissatisfaction and release the tension he feels. To do so in a culture which places a high value on indirection in emo-

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tionally charged relationships would be such a serious breach of etiquette as to threaten permanent damage, if not actual dissolution, of the marriage relationship (Hammond 1959: 187; 1963: 21). Thus if he has been angered over his wife's frequent failure to prepare his food properly, or to present it to him before his kinsmen with a proper show of deference, he need not and should not reprimand her directly. He need only wait until she is visited by one of her younger sisters when he can call out:

> Eh! Here come women more worthless than my wife! What do you want here? Are you looking for *sacabo* (a millet cake)? Who eats well here? Do you want an old groundnut? No one here has tasted *sacabo* with sauce since your sister came to my house!

By expressing his resentment of his wife in this way the husband is able—indirectly—to communicate the cause of his displeasure, to elicit support for himself and social pressure against her, and to achieve harmlessly the reduction of his hostile feelings. All this he accomplishes without risking the sort of direct and angry confrontation which might have a permanently damaging effect on their relationship. The wife's younger sisters cannot take offense at this joking, and they can be relied upon to relay the husband's complaints to their sister—if, indeed, she does not herself overhear the joking exchange. Furthermore, since a wife's younger sisters are usually aware of the sources of her grievance with her husband, they can use the same means to communicate to him the reason for her resentment and consequent failure to perform her domestic tasks to his satisfaction.

Similarly, when a man's younger brothers come into the presence of his wife, she is expected to insult them in the same way—to deride with humor their appearance, their lack of energy, their skill at their work, or their intelligence. The expectation and acceptance of such joking provides her with an indirect means of criticizing her husband as well. By saving her grievances until she is in the company of her husband's younger siblings, she may, within the context of joking, pour out her resentment at the way she is treated, revealing succinctly the causes of her dissatisfaction. His brothers can be relied upon to relay to her husband what she has said, if he has not himself overheard the exchange. If he recognizes as valid the criticism implied by her joking remarks, he may correct those aspects of his behavior which are frustrating or unsatisfactory to her. Indeed, if the criticisms are justified, his kinsmen are likely to exert pressure on him to do so. The joking provides the woman with a means of channeling in a culturally acceptable manner the aggressive feelings generated by her frustrations. And her husband's younger brothers, by retorting with hostile banter of the same sort, can convey to her the dissatisfaction of both her husband and their other kinsmen with her comportment, thus providing her, too, with a chance to mend her ways.

By these means both marriage partners have an equal opportunity to evaluate the content of the other's criticism and, if necessary, to alter their behavior accordingly. Since this is achieved through joking, the result of such an exchange is the maintenance of communication, the exercise of a measure of social control, and the mutual reduction of frustration without the face-to-face conflict that might result in permanent damage to both the marriage relation-

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ship itself and the contract of interlineage co-operation and solidarity which every marriage serves to establish or reinforce.[4]

Although this joking interchange is seen in its full implications when there is an immediate source of dissension between marriage partners, it may also occur in the absence of any specific difficulty. Then it is apparently indulged in simply because it is expected, and for the pleasure which the Mossi, like all people, derive from an occasion to exercise their wit. It is this relatively disinterested joking which has been most frequently described in the literature, and this may account for the failure of many scholars to perceive more fully the important social and psychological functions which joking may fulfill.

Conclusion

This paper has been written as a tentative step toward a reformulation of the various and disparate observations on joking contained in the anthropological literature. I have contended that an analysis of this literature indicates that wherever joking is institutionalized the structural relationship between the participants tends to be characterized by five significantly interrelated structural attributes: separation, reciprocity, ambivalence, equality, and independence. I have also indicated that such joking may serve as an adjustive mechanism by providing for the concurrent maintenance of communication, control, and the culturally harmless catharsis of potentially disruptive emotions.

A variety of forms of institutionalized joking found among the Mossi of Yatenga have been cited to illustrate these points. However, I suggest that the factors which cluster with this reliance on joking as an adjustive mechanism are not unique to the Mossi. Institutionalized joking reported for other parts of Africa appears to be structurally and processually similar.

NOTES

1. A shorter version of this paper was read at the annual meeting of the American Anthropological Association held in San Francisco in November, 1963. It is based on field research conducted among the Mossi from 1954 to 1956 with the assistance of a Ford Foundation Fellowship.

2. Marriage between the members of descent groups united by a joking alliance is regarded by the Mossi as highly desirable, apparently in recognition of the useful role of joking as an adjustive mechanism. Once such a marriage is contracted, however, Ego and his wife must take care that their joking insults are directed only at the younger kinsmen of the other and that the insulting remarks are personal. It would, for example, be acceptable for Ego to call his wife's younger sister a disreputable shrew but dangerous to call her a slave (a term of disrespect used frequently in joking between sibs). To refer to her as a slave would cast unflattering aspersions on her entire kin group, including her mother and father, with whom, in their new status as parents-in-law, Ego may no longer joke.

3. I believe that joking is also institutionalized between the Mossi and the Yarse, a highly acculturated ethnic minority of Mande origin who live throughout Yatenga. There is also joking between the Mossi and the indigenous blacksmith caste. Unfortunately my data on these two instances of joking are inadequate.

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4. The importance of sibling-in-law joking as a means of regulating conflict in the Mossi marriage relationship is further substantiated by the results of comparative research conducted among the Mossi resettled at the Office du Niger in the neighboring Republic of Mali.

The Mossi, who were first forcibly and later voluntarily resettled in Mali, were allocated farm land as elementary family units without regard for their extended kinship affiliations. Thus a man often found himself living in unaccustomed "isolation," in the company only of his wife or wives and children, and otherwise surrounded by total strangers. Although the potential for conflict in the marriage relationship remained high, or was even augmented by the stresses of adjusting to a changed milieu, sibling-in-law joking, the institution through which such tension is traditionally regulated among the Mossi, was no longer operative. Unless the younger siblings of each spouse had accompanied them to the resettlement area, those individuals were absent to whom they might have communicated their grievances and expressed their aggressive sentiments in a socially harmless, psychologically satisfactory, and culturally acceptable way.

As the traditionally sanctioned means of dealing with tension resulting from marital conflict was no longer available to the Mossi resettled in Mali, there occurred an increase in the incidence both of violence in marital disputes and of separation and divorce.

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had done so with full permission of his father and in place of an unadventurous elder brother.

For example, the ruling family of the Boulsa province claimed that its ancestor, Naba Namende, was the eldest son of Mogho Naba Oubri and chose to become his father's *Kourita* (a young son of a deceased Mogho Naba chosen as his father's personal representative on earth) and go into exile rather than subject his younger brother to the ordeal. At the same time, Namende sought to retain royal power equal to that of his brother, the new Mogho Naba, by taking Oubri's royal amulets with him.[3]

Mane province, too, was founded by one Nyaseme, a son of Koudoumie, who felt that he should have been given the nam. When routed in battle by his elder brother Kouda, he moved into the region of Mane, where he defeated the indigenous Ninisi and ruled over them. The princes who broke away from Ouagadougou during Koudoumie's reign considered themselves theoretically equal to the supreme ruler. Thus, they took the title of Dim. By so doing, they dramatized their claim to equality of status, if not of power, with the Mogho Naba, and their determination to "submit only to God."[4]

The Mossi insist that the relationship between the Mogho Naba and the Dimdamba was similar to that between father and sons, since the Dimdamba were "really the sons of the Mogho Naba" and are said to have acted as such. This analogy is interesting in view of the Mossi traditional pattern of avoidance—combined with love and tolerance—between fathers and elder sons.[5] The Dimdamba were often allowed to act at variance with the Mogho Naba. Some of them shifted allegiance from kingdom to kingdom; others usurped the power of the Mogho Naba over smaller districts, or claimed that they had been given this power; and most of them regulated their own affairs with little interference from their sovereign. He, as "father," interfered on occasion in their internal affairs, demanding help from them and often chastising them if they failed to comply.

The Mogho Naba and the Dimdamba often appointed their younger sons or brothers as rulers (Kombemba) of the districts that made up their kingdoms and principalities. In this way, power and authority were kept within the royal clan and its lineages. Nevertheless, in keeping with the concept of corporate access to the nam, the rulers of these dependencies had traditions that served to reconcile their claims to kingly or princely status with their actual subordinate position. District founders, too, were often portrayed as eldest sons who had been cheated out of their patrimony or had voluntarily left it to establish new districts. In some cases, the legendary heroes were granted miraculous births as well.

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As soon as the prince arrived, the Ouidi Naba made preparations to receive the chiefs of such local districts as Manga, Nobere, and Basgana, who visited the prince and brought him wives, livestock, and money. During a seven-day period, other chiefs and well-wishers visited the new chief and offered him gifts. When this period was over, the new Djiba Naba gave wives to the noble members of his escort and livestock, money, and kola nuts to the commoners and serfs, and sent the group back to Ouagadougou. Then he settled down to the life of a typical district chief, governing his villages in the name of the Mogho Naba, paying him tribute, and settling disputes among his villagers. Dim Delobson reports that the other district chiefs and the heads of such principalities as Boussouma and Conquizitenga formerly sent presents to the Djiba Naba when they sent their annual tribute to the Mogho Naba.[51] But this contradicts all that I heard and saw of the relationship between the royal heir and the other district chiefs. They treated him as an equal and showed no deference to him either in private or on ceremonial occasions. As a matter of fact, in the presence of the Mogho Naba, the royal heir actually effaced himself before the other district chiefs. This behavior served to preserve the concept of equal access of all members of the ruling clan to the ancestral nam. The Mogho Naba was head of the ruling group as well as political leader of the Mossi. His son, on the other hand, was often a junior in terms of age and generation within the ruling group, but politically he was on the same level as the other district chiefs. The sovereign could not show by his behavior that his son was either actually or potentially superior to the other Nanamse; nor could the prince presume to be haughty because of his strategic but accidental relationship to the actual possessor of the nam. Had he tried to do so, he might have ruined his chances of being selected to take over the "house" of his father and his father's fathers.

The relations between the Mogho Naba and his children, including his heir, were characterized by formality—at least in public. Nevertheless, the ruler took a vital interest in the training and welfare of the youthful Djiba Naba. Mogho Naba Wobogo (1890-96) reportedly had the Ouidi Naba and the Baloum Naba of Djiba executed because the Crown Prince died under strange circumstances while under their care. Yet the Mogho Naba was not expected to enjoy seeing his son and heir, because of the Mossi father's traditional anxiety regarding those individuals who would profit most from his death. At the assemblies of district chiefs called by the Mogho Naba, the royal heir was not even greeted by his father; moreover, the heir usually stood at the edge of the assembly and left without attending the customary feast. However, there is considerable evidence that the Mogho

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Naba regularly saw his son in private, and that the prince often interceded successfully with his father for the lives of rebels or criminals.

The Mogho Naba seldom saw his younger sons, who usually remained with their mothers' patrilineages until they were old enough to be assigned district chieftainships or sent to live in villages controlled by the Baloum Naba. He was rather suspicious of these boys, who, if certain traditions are believed, were not averse to plotting the death of the Djiba Naba in order to succeed to the nam. The district chiefs also feared these younger sons, in whose favor they were often deposed by the Mogho Naba. Almost all of the dynastic changes that occurred in the Mossi districts seem to have stemmed from a ruler's attempt to find districts for his brothers or his younger sons.

The ruler was less concerned with the welfare of his daughters and female relatives. Their marriages seldom benefited the political system. As a matter of fact, the behavior of a royal princess usually strained the relations between her husband and the ruling lineage. The reason for this was a status conflict: as wives, they had low prestige in Mossi society; but as relatives of the Mogho Naba, they enjoyed high status. This contradiction made it difficult for them to accept the low estate of wives. Consequently, they clashed with their husband and often dominated the women and co-wives in his compound. Since few Mossi men tolerate strife within their household, these noble wives often withdrew from their husband's home and established one of their own. The one exception to this pattern was the ruler's eldest daughter, the Napoko, whose ceremonial duties at his death and during the interregnum compelled her to remain loyal to the husband chosen for her by the king. Like her brother, the Crown Prince, if she violated any of the traditions and thus became ineligible to fulfill her duties to her father and to the state, she endangered the country at its weakest moment, when the government was being transferred from the deceased Mogho Naba to his successor.

The death of a Mogho Naba was usually attributed to foul play or supernatural forces. When Mogho Naba Sagha II died in 1957, a report from Ouagadougou stated that the Governor of the Upper Volta had felt constrained to have an autopsy performed to quell rumors that the monarch had died of poisoning.[44] The obvious function of such rumors was to dramatize the gravity of the situation during the interregnum.

Because the Mogho Naba was usually accompanied by a page, it was often this boy who witnessed his death. It was the page's responsibility to notify the Baloum Naba, who notified, in order, the Ouidi Naba, the Larhalle Naba, the Kamsaogho Naba, the Gounga Naba, the ruler's children,

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V

LAW AND THE JUDICIAL PROCESS

[671] The Mossi possessed a comprehensive body of rules governing human conduct. These rules were well known to the people, and violators were punished by the responsible authorities. The Mossi might be said to have had substantive law, but they had no written codes. Nevertheless, the lack of written codes does not warrant Mangin's blanket criticism of Mossi judicial processes: "Of course, there was no written code, no formal scale of penalties. Everything depended on custom and on the whim of the judge. [662] Thus, the wealthy could obtain sentences in their favor by paying the judges, and thieves could avoid punishment by sharing their loot with the Naba."[1] Custom did dictate the penalties, just as "written custom" dictates penalties [692] in all written legal codes. But, as we shall see, the Mossi did have a known [695] scale of penalties. Moreover, a Mossi judge had to be careful in rendering judgment, because his decisions could be reviewed by a higher court.

596 The head of the Mossi extended family, the *Yirisoba,* was responsible 681 for the everyday conduct of his charges. It was his duty to settle all family quarrels, and to punish persons guilty of theft within the compound, disrespect toward elders, and incest. Punishment for the lesser wrongs included 596 reprimands and floggings. A person found guilty of disrespect to the elders 683 or of incest could be banished from the group. But banishment was so severe 684 that it was imposed only if the criminal refused to make the usual conciliatory gestures and was condemned by all the members of his boodoo. Even after this condemnation, however, he could ask a "sister's son," a yagenga, [613] to intercede for him. This man, the son of a female lineage member, had many privileges within his mother's brother's lineage, including the right to mediate between an exile and his boodoo.

593 Amicable relations within the family group were most often disrupted 586 by conjugal difficulties. A Mossi husband could occasionally flog an erring 613 wife, but he was not allowed to maltreat her. When a man became disgusted with his wife and wished to repudiate her, he put her water pots in the compound yard. This rather serious action often led to hostile relations

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between the lineages concerned. If either the repudiated woman or a member of her husband's lineage wished to initiate a reconciliation, she or he had to summon a yagenga. He alone was permitted to reconcile the couple after the pots had been placed in the courtyard. When a woman felt that she was being maltreated by her husband, she usually fled to her own patrilineage and waited for her husband's patrilineage—usually his brothers—to visit her male relatives and discuss the case. If the woman was judged guilty, she was reprimanded and sometimes flogged by her own relatives for causing trouble between the two lineages, and then sent home to her husband. However, if the man was found guilty, his wife was returned to him, but he was warned that he would forfeit all rights to her if he maltreated her again. A man who lost his wife through repeated maltreatment could not take the matter to court, because chiefs usually refused to deal with purely domestic issues. His only recourse was to induce one of his lineage brothers to recall a daughter who had married into his wife's lineage. This act was usually sufficient to bring about the reconciliation of the estranged couple before innocent persons were hurt.

The Mossi made every effort to solve minor problems without recourse to the chiefs. The local Boodkasemdamba and lineage elders adjudicated quarrels and simple offenses involving members of minimal segments in the various village saghse. They even tried to resolve difficulties between lineage members of larger segments who lived in different villages. The elders often imposed punishments such as reprimands, floggings, and even banishment. The convicted person did not usually appeal to the chief, because he knew that the chief would advise him to settle his problem within the family.

Unrelated villagers also tried to settle difficulties among themselves without appealing to the chief. For example, a man who was caught stealing could be beaten or even killed by his intended victims, and the chief did not punish them for their action. In many cases, villagers simply took the thief back to his relatives, knowing they would punish him. Occasionally, a family disgraced by a thieving member forced him to kill himself. When this happened the chief held an inquest but took no other action.

The Mossi gave a fairly simple explanation for returning a thief to his relatives for punishment. They said that every family had "weak" members, and that by not harming the captured thief they were only protecting themselves against retaliation if one of their own relatives should commit a similar crime. But a more important reason seems to have been their fear of starting a feud that might result in the premeditated murder of a man and the subsequent execution of his murderer.

The one crime that invoked terrible unofficial sanctions was rape. If the

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father had given the woman a silver bracelet before he died, and that the babissi felt that this was sufficient, since she had a husband to provide for her. Furthermore, Moussa said that the inheritance had already been distributed, and that any redistribution would impose a hardship on all concerned.

Interpreting the inheritance law according to common practice, the chief ruled that the milk from a man's cattle was for *all* his children, regardless of sex, and that the fact that the father had formerly given the daughter a bracelet should not have influenced the distribution of the inheritance. The chief stated that the woman should receive at least one cow, and that if the defendant did not agree, he (the chief) would recall all the animals and supervise their distribution. He did not feel that he had to state the principles by which he had reached his judgment, for the consensus among the people of the district was that the heir was trying to take advantage of the law for his own selfish interests. Rather than appeal to Ouagadougou, Moussa and his babissi accepted the verdict.

On the basis of these and other cases, we are led to the conclusion that the Mossi felt that law and the judicial process should serve to reconcile people and to maintain what was commonly considered to be social justice.

Most of the cases at the district court were tried in the same manner as those cited above. Cases involving relations between men and women were the most common. This is paradoxical, because the district chief tried to avoid any involvement with such cases. For every domestic case tried by the district chief, five others were sent back to the village or lineage level. Even so, it is estimated that about 80 per cent of the cases tried by Mossi district chiefs ultimately concerned women. The most common case of this type was the alleged refusal of a woman to return to her husband.[9] If the judge found that another man had encouraged her to leave her husband, he ordered her to return to him and warned her and the man about the possibility of serious difficulty with her husband's relatives. On the other hand, if the chief found that the woman had left a cruel husband who threatened to harm her or her relatives, he warned the husband not to carry out his threats. The Mossi had no bride price; thus, a woman's family was not faced with the problem of restitution. Sometimes, an angry husband did demand that his wife's family return the gifts (*pogopoussum*, "thanks for the woman") he had given them from time to time—e.g., at funerals—and they complied.

Adultery cases were next in frequency at the district court. A man convicted of adultery with another man's wife was either warned to leave her alone or fined a sheep or a goat. He was also liable to be put in stocks for

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the status of women. They maintained that the French had conquered the Mossi men, not the women, and that the administration should not interfere with the way in which a Moaga treated his wife. Ironically enough, there was little the administration could do for the Mossi women, since the latter were too timid to approach the Europeans. Most of them continued to react to maltreatment from their husbands by running away, but now they went to the Gold Coast with labor migrants instead of returning to their lineage.

Although the Mossi chiefs had little autonomy in the administration of their subjects, and had to look to the administration for guidance in nearly everything they did, they were not completely powerless. They were the representatives of the colonial administration on the local level, and as such they could control their subjects through the differential allocation of prestations. Those Mossi who had maintained the traditional respect for the chiefs could look forward to less arduous tasks for the administration and to the avoidance of forced labor or army recruitment. Those who by their actions or attitude indicated that they had lost respect for the chiefs were penalized accordingly. Chiefs were also able to retain some control over their subjects because they were still the centers of social, economic, and political relations within their territories. They still received homage and presents from their more loyal or traditionalistic subjects, and with these goods and services they could bind other persons to themselves. Clever chiefs were able to manipulate the colonial administration and use it to enhance their traditional position so successfully that the administration and the missionaries had to take these men into account whenever they wished to establish contact with the population.

The desire of the missionaries to establish missions and schools for the purpose of converting the Mossi to Christianity presented the chiefs with a great challenge because, unlike the administration, the missionaries tried to establish direct contact with the people. The chiefs not only did not like to have Europeans living in their midst, but feared that they would lose control over their subjects who went to live near the missions. However, the chiefs could not refuse to grant the missionaries land on which to build missions and schools. They also provided labor for them, just as they did for the construction of administrative buildings and roads. Similarly, the chiefs recruited children for the mission schools in the same spirit as they recruited students for the schools of the administration. The difference between the Catholic missionaries and the administration with respect to education was that while the former were interested in educating the children of chiefs, they were also interested in children from other backgrounds. Nevertheless, the majority of chiefs continued to send to school

12:Skinner E-4,5 (1955-1957) 1962
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837 man even refrains from making overtures to a woman whose husband's female relatives may be married to a member of his own 609 lineage. He fears that a wronged husband may have the wives of his 613 lineage brothers recalled, thus causing dissension within and between the two lineages. If none of these complications are present, a man seeks out a person who knows the woman and sends a message de- 631 claring his intentions. If the response is favorable, the man then buys 601 four large kola nuts (four being the number for a woman), wraps them together with 44 francs, and send them to his lady. This procedure may be followed on subsequent market days without the two parties ever coming into direct contact with each other. Finally, however, a rendezvous is arranged, and on the pretense of leaving the market to visit a relative for several days, the woman goes instead to her lover's village.

837 These casual affairs started at the market sometimes become quite 586 serious, and if for any reason they are sanctioned by the relatives of either the man or the woman, they often lead to the breakup of a 443 marriage. And since the market is the place where disputants of any 572 sort most likely come into contact, it is here that fights over "stolen" wives break out.

837 This pattern of extramarial relationships centering around the 443 market place is so common among the Mossi that the younger men, and even some of the older ones, are disappointed with the "market" when their mistresses do not appear. Mossi men who sit under the shelters around the market place can usually give an inquirer not only the name of a woman, the name and village of her husband and father, but also the name and village of her paramour. Characteristically enough, they are always "ignorant" of the escapades of their own 593 female relatives or of the wives of their lineage members. The only 443 time when men act as though their relatives might be involved in extramarital affairs is when for some purpose or another a man has to recall a wife or daughter who has gone to visit a relative in another village or district. Regardless of how pressing the problem may be, a man will seldom go directly to his father-in-law's house to recall the woman. He goes to the market nearest to his in-laws' village, and seeks his wife there. If he does not find her or any of her relatives, he goes to the part of the market in which people from her village sell their products and sends a message to her family that he will come for her the next day, or that he would like her to come home.

443 A market place is also one of the best places to look for news of a 203 runaway wife, or of any stranger in an area. The Mossi say that women have footprints like an elephant in that they can be found quite easily, but that the footprints are always clearest in the market.